BATTLE OF THE SILKEN GIANTS:

CADILLAC DE VILLE

VS.

IMPERIAL LE BARON

VS.

LINCOLN CONTINENTAL

Like two-and-a-half ton credit cards, the luxury cars roll down the freeways of America, collecting wishful looks everywhere. Are they worth it? And which is the best?

To begin with, we have to say out front that the design and marketing concepts behind these three luxury cars are diametrically opposed to ours. They represent the extremes of bad space utilization, wasted materials, poor fuel economy and status-buying that we at *Road Test* have always felt to be the biggest problems in the American automotive marketplace.

Yet the fact remains that the single most discernible trend in today's market is the trend to luxury cars and luxury options. It is a trend that no magazine involved with road testing can afford to ignore, because it is an active, direct expression of the consumer's state of mind. Thus the luxury cars are very important in 1975, so much so that there is a raging debate within the industry between the econocar faction and the luxocar faction as to where the new-car money should go. The fact is that whatever the results of the turmoil in the showroom, there will always be "status-cars," cars that are sold not for their ability to perform on the road, but for their ability to perform in people's egos, to say to the world "my owner is rich, or damned near."

Certainly nobody who buys a Cadillac or Lincoln or Imperial buys it because of its braking or cornering ability; they are more concerned with the ephemeral virtues of luxury, of comfort and silence and the exclusion of the raucous outside world. In that sense any attempt to test the cars must include an evaluation of those ultra-subjective aspects of the cars.

Grasping the bull by the horns, we have done that. We turned off our admitted prejudices against these cars and tried to think of them in the same way the wealthy investor from Westchester or the parts wholesaler from Grosse Pointe would. We even found owners and ex-owners of cars like these and polled their opinions to see how close we were to approximating the point of view encompassed by the leather interiors and opera windows.

Naturally, because we are still in the business of road testing cars—of whatever stripe—we ran our complete road test procedure with each car, on the skid pad, drag strip and public roads, and there were a few surprises there as well as the expected performances by cars weighing two and a half tons.

The cars were chosen for their in-class competition, which meant that all were about the same price: around $11,000. They are all "town coupes," which in the luxury car parlance of Detroit means a two-door coupe with an opera window and the middle-to-upper accessories treatment. The relative sales figures of the cars tell an interesting story in themselves: the Cadillac is the sales leader, with a total of 223,844 cars sold in 1974, compared to Lincoln's 87,104 and the Imperial's 12,205. The Cadillac—"the standard of the world"—is clearly the marketplace winner in volume, but its sales were only 77 per cent of 1973's, while the Imperial's were a remarkable 93 per cent. The Lincoln suffered the greatest loss, with 73 per cent of its previous year's sales. If those seem like big drops, consider the standard-size Buick's loss at 49 per cent . . . and then recall the news stories about Cadillac being the only American carmaker running full tilt. Something, clearly, is happening—and it is no good to try to explain the phenomenon by fancy phrases like "fleet sales" and "the terrific affluence of luxury car owners" because the point isn't just that Cadillac is selling cars, but that the other carmakers are rolling the presses nonstop to get everybody in *some* kind of luxury car, whether it's a tricked-up Pinto or an LTD.

Whatever the result of that ground swell of interest in the luxocar (and *we* hope that most people will opt for the tricked-up Pinto instead of a monstercar), right now they are the Hot Setup, like Muscle-cars and Ponycars in the mid '60s—especially if the rebates fail to stimulate buying through to the next model year, something we won't know until then.

We did find one thing out about these particular luxury cars immediately, however. They all act like an enormous credit card, even in the cynical, supposedly classless days of Gerald Ford's America. To pull up to a gas station, restaurant, or hotel in a Town Coupe or Le Baron is like presenting your unlimited American Express Card to everyone on the street. Even the police seem to leave the silken giants alone, which explains all the tickets the blue-haired society matrons in Continentals *don't* get as they blaze down the Interstate.

But whatever *your* view of these behemoths, we think you'll find some unexpected results in our tests and come away with a better understanding of these cars.

We certainly found our own awareness of the factors inherent in these cars that make them so attractive to their buyers increased, even if we *don't* like them any better. But then, we don't live in Grosse Pointe, either.

Do American luxury cars really confer instant social status on their owners? The answer can be found in the speed with which a gas station attendant cleans your windshield, in the fuss a doorman at a fancy restaurant makes over you and in the envious stares of your neighbors. Don't tell 'em about the payments or the fuel consumption.

Photo taken at Fashion Island, Newport Beach

MICHAEL GOING PHOTOGRAPHY

CADILLAC

There may be somebody in America who doesn't know what *Cadillac* means, but if so he's probably living in a time capsule planted in 1890. For about as long as anybody living can remember, that name has been synonomous with style, luxury and money.

The image Cadillac has maintained against the fickle tides of fashion is one of almost-affordable aloofness, of the ultimate one-up car. It is an image so ingrained into our culture that, like Kleenex and Jeep, the very word "Cadillac" has come to mean more than just an automobile, a thing. "The American standard for the world," they call it, and to a good portion of Western humanity, it really is that—for better or worse. The Ugly American doesn't drive a Pinto, he drives a huge Cadillac.

The car we chose to test from the Cadillac lineup was the Coupe DeVille, the Chevrolet of the Caddy line. You can build your DeVille from a plastic nightmare to a leather-and-incense filled rolling bordello; ours was somewhere in between. It carries that almost-affordable idea the best; at $10,000 it can be bought by just about anyone with a smiling banker and a '68 Chevelle to trade in . . . as long as he's willing to not gag at car payments that look like *house* payments, that is.

For that ten grand you get: 230 inches of overall length, 79.8 inches of width, and a body stuffed full of 500 cubic inch V-8 and Turbo Hydra-Matic transmission . . . plus. Plus about 4000 lbs. of gadgets, gewgaws, and crushed Piranha-skin leather. What goodies? Well, take a deep breath: automatic cruise control, automatic photocell-controlled lights, power antenna with an AM/FM/stereo tape sound unit, vinyl top with opera windows, monitors for all lights in the car, temperature-controlled air conditioning and heating, six-way power seats and lighted vanity mirror in the sun visor on the passenger's side, and tiltable steering wheel to mention but a few. On the mechanical side, you get a coil-sprung live axle and an electronic ignition for that 190-HP V-8, along with a tank capacity of about 27 gallons, not to mention a turning *radius* of just over 24 feet.

After it's all put together in the DeVille, it becomes the hottest-selling luxury car there is, and if you don't believe that, just look around someday on the freeway. Are its huge sales figures justified by its quality?

Frankly, we don't think so. Because despite the impressive array of gadgets on the car, despite the Cadillac name all over the car, the car just isn't very . . . well, luxurious. The seats in our test car were not buckets, but split-bench, with individual power adjustment. They could be fitted nearly right to everyone, but somehow they just never got really comfortable, perhaps because of the short seat bottom. The fake wood (yes, Virginia, *fake*) looked so bad we couldn't believe Cadillac was serious; it wrapped around corners and was used places where no wood could conceivably have been used. The upholstery was slick, and passengers in the back seat found themselves sliding around as the big car trundled down the road. The finish on the dashboard was about on a par with current Chevy levels, and even looked the part, so that it took no imagination to see "Caprice" where "Coupe De Ville" was lettered.

There was, needless to say, a lot of room inside. Six people will indeed fit inside the Caddy coupe, even if the rear seat passengers are a little short on legroom. And it must be said that if anything balanced the books as far as that elusive "luxury" feel goes, that airspace around the driver did. It was something like sitting in the Main Dining Salon of the *Queen Mary;* you knew that there was movement and commotion all around you, but it somehow didn't matter. You could put the thing on cruise control (activated by a flip-switch on the dash and a button on the turn indicator stalk) and just sail along, quietly listening to the speakers waft out

the dulcimer tones of whatever you wanted.

And *sail* is the operative word for how the big Cadillac moved. Without belaboring the point, it is *not* a nimble automobile. The skid pad showed us a car that would understeer the front tires right off the rims if you wanted to keep your boot into the throttle, and on our transient response course, it recorded a dismal 21.6 mph. Considering that the Cadillac weighs 4950 lbs, it could hardly be otherwise, but it is one thing to simply say "those things don't handle" and quite another to try to wrestle it around some tight turns. That it leans is also probably a foregone conclusion, and if it isn't, it should be: the car tilted so far on the skid pad that the long hood obliterated our view of the white guide line. To say it wasn't suited for back-country sporting motoring is the understatement of the century.

And yet, as you float down the road in the serene calmness of the DeVille, you can't help but begin to see what those Caddy buyers are so happy about, because the Cadillac engineers have taken all—and we mean *all*—of the effort out of driving the car. It really is possible to herd the car down long stretches of freeway without being fully conscious of doing so, which—to us, anyway—is a kind of frightening experience on the order of amnesia, but which, to a bone-tired executive, must be like a soothing massage after his tense day full of knotted stomach muscles and unkillable corporate headaches.

Whether or not that kind of isolation is good or bad depends on your point of view, but Cadillac, despite the fact that its car wasn't the quietest (the dBA reading at 70 mph was 67, compared to the Continental's 65), has achieved the most pronounced separation of the driver and his environment of any of the cars we tested. There is even a long horizontal strip of gauges and lights just below the windshield to tell the driver everything he should know, except speed; engine condition, time, vacuum pressure (via a green light for "good mileage" and an amber one for, presumably, "not-so-good"), and even whether or not someone is breaking into your car. Which, by the way, is not very hard to do. In fact, we had a couple of embarrassing occasions in which we had to use the old coat-hanger trick to get the car open because of the alacrity with which the car doors on luxury cars close . . . usually with the keys still in the ignition or on the seat. Even for our untrained amateur, it was the work of only 15 seconds to unlock the door . . . and the hooting horns and flashing lights can be easily disconnected by anyone who knows how (no, we're not going to contribute to the delinquency of a subscriber by telling you how: write to Cadillac, or better yet, ask a service station man).

A side of the Big Blue Caddy that we hadn't expected showed up at the dragstrip. To our amazement, the car recorded a 0–60 time of 10.9 seconds, and as if that weren't surprise enough, it stopped from 60 mph in 153 feet, giving it a brake rating of 84 per cent. Heady stuff for a car weighing 2.5 tons, especially considering that it came to us with disc brakes in front and drums in the back. It stopped straight as a die every time (and you can be sure we did a few times because of the low figure), and the only evidence that it had been flogged was an acrid smell and a good deal of fade. It could probably have done even better in acceleration if it weren't for the misfire plaguing the mid-range.

Naturally, for all of that performance coming from a huge V-8 pushing a sizeable mass around, there must be a tradeoff somewhere. And it comes in fuel economy. The Coupe De Ville is equipped with a 2.73:1 rear end, which should give reasonable hopes of middling-good fuel consumption to the owner who wishes to drive by the little green and yellow lights. We got an overall test figure of 11.6 mpg, which certainly represents some progress from the dark days of 8–9 mpg for standard sized cars, let alone battleships of the DeVille class. With careful driving you

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IMPERIAL

There was a time when Chrysler Corporation built a Chrysler that could blow the doors off anything made in America, not only for speed and handling, but for comfort as well. It was called the 300-X, and the X stood for a letter denoting the series of production. It was a hardcore automobile designed to hammer down the farm roads of Indiana as well as the freeways of New York. It was a good car, in every sense, but it was bested by another Chrysler car, even more exclusive: the Imperial.

The old Imperial was a little more softly sprung than the letter-series 300, but only a little; it was a road car in the same ways the 300 was; fast, reliable, tough and comfortable. But all that was before the grisly days of the early '60s, when Chrysler seemed to be on the verge of disaster, full of Corporate scandals and doomsaying. The day was saved—barely—and Chrysler is still in the car business. But the cars it builds today are as different from the best 300s and Imperials as you can imagine. They are of necessity built to compete in a narrowing market against the GM and Ford offerings, something which has mandated some concessions the oldline Chrysler engineers never wanted to make.

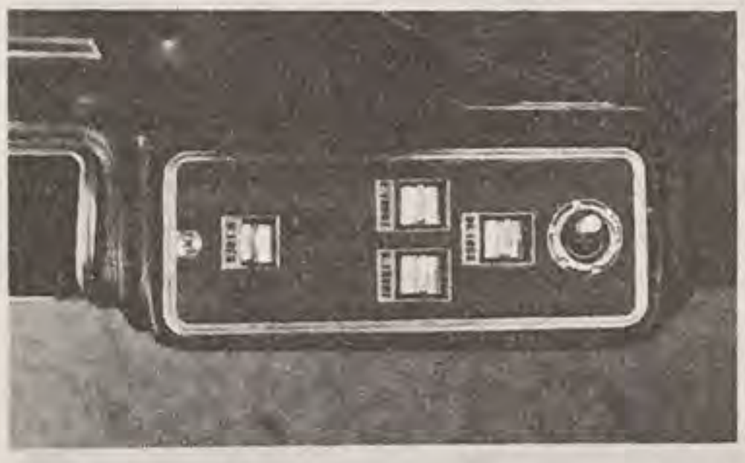
The result, in the new Imperial, is a luxury car with some schizoid characteristics. All the proper luxury car things are there in the Imperial, but they are a little jumbled, a little out of focus.

The Imperial isn't the biggest of our three luxocars; it weighs 5100 lbs, is 231 inches long and 79.7 inches wide, putting it squarely between the Lincoln and Cadillac. And yet, the feeling remains in either the onlooker or passenger, that it *is* the biggest. The visual weight of the car is enormous, making it seem the most ponderous of the three. It may be a deliberate part of Chrysler's styling, to prepare the driver subconsciously to believe that he is in the Big Mother of all time.

If so, it is preparation wasted, because as soon as you enter the car it feels like it's shrunk five feet in all directions. Now, we are *not* saying that there isn't room in the Imperial—there is at least as much as the other cars—but our perception of the room was radically different than in the others. The windshield seems too low, the seats too high and the rear compartment too long; these are impressions—shared by *all* our test drivers—that strike you immediately, before you've even gotten the key into the ignition. And they never really leave your awareness.

After you lose the impact of the spatial distortion, and actually examine the features and appointments of the Imperial, you see where most of the $10,000 went. The Imperial's fake wood is much more convincing than the Cadillac's, since it is used more sparingly and in places where it could conceivably *be* wood. The only giveaway is the odd place where two pieces don't quite join properly, where an exposed edge shouts "plastic!" at you. But the opulence of the other interior bits overwhelms any minor details like that; the red leather seats and panelling look—and feel—like something Queen Victoria might have had in her London-to-Edinburgh coach. In fact, it looks as though more styling money was spent on those elaborate contours and pleats of the seats than on the whole exterior. Unfortunately, it doesn't feel that way.

The Imperial's front seats are of the same pattern as the Cadillac's: split-bench with an armrest between and power adjustment in six directions. They look like you'd sink into one and never get up; full, deep, as comfortable as the Spanish leather sofa sitting in front of the fire. So it was with some incredulity that we squirmed and fiddled and squirmed some more, looking for some position of the seats that would fit our bodies. We never really found it. The seatbacks are too short, and that gorgeous massive roll on the seatback falls right on your shoulders (unless you're 4′ 6″) and forces your head and neck forward. In all fairness, though, the combination of the tilting steering wheel and unlimited seat adjustment *did*



give us a good driving position, one which allowed us good control and vision. It's just that it wasn't very comfortable . . . something a little odd in a "luxury" car.

If we were disappointed at the way the seats worked, we have nothing but good things to say about the control layout of the dashboard. Here the Chrysler stylists ignored Cadillac's disjointed lead (in which half of the vital instruments are separated by a visual break from the other half) and produced a very functional-looking arrangement of simple dials, levers, pushbuttons and knobs. The Imperial had the same set of gadgets the Cadillac and Lincoln had—cruise control, automatic temperature control, automatic lights, intermittent wipers, power door locks, security system, remote trunk release—but the pieces all seemed to fit better than in the Cadillac.

We noted that visibility from the driver's seat was somewhat limited by the low windshield; it was further obscured by the huge C pillar, which—like the Cadillac—had an opera window to aid somewhat in seeing the Lotus Elan hidden there in your rear three-quarter. The Imperial was, however, much easier to thread through the obstacle course of daily driving, because its fenders were peaked, making parallel parking less of a chore than with the Cadillac. (Now we know why Caddies always wear curb feelers.)

Rear seat occupants in the Imperial have only slightly less opulence around them than the front seaters . . . although the right rear quarter panel in our test car was falling off when we got it. Like the other two luxocars, the Imperial is equipped with an ashtray and cigarette lighter for each person, the ones in the back being built into the armrests. The actual amount of room available to those rear seat occupants is much like that in the Cadillac; enough for a short person to lie down sideways, with good headroom and fair legroom, if the front seat is a good way back in its travel. In all these cars, if someone short was driving, there was more than enough legroom in the rear.

We didn't say much about trunk space in the Cadillac, but it had plenty, as did the Le Baron, although the relative shapes of the trunks are different. We found it no trouble to drop a six-foot ladder into any one of the trunks in the luxury cars, and in fact, the amount of luggage space available in each was fairly constant.

The automatic lights on the Imperial worked the same way as the Cadillac's, except that there was no doorhandle light or 20-seconds feature. And like the Cadillac's, the system worked fine; not only could you set the lights to come on at a certain outside light level, you could also set them to go on high beams automatically. Unlike the Cadillac, though, the Imperial (as well as the Lincoln) has round headlights instead of the (more stylish?) square GM units, which didn't seem to offer either less or more in the way of lighting effectiveness. Both the Lincoln and Imperial have hideaway headlights.

Some mention must be made of the excellent radio in the Imperial, which was clearly the best of the lot. It was an AM/FM stereo unit with tuning bars for local and distant stations on the fascia, and an *additional* tuning bar on the floor to the left of the headlight dimmer switch. Now *that's* class . . . and it worked beautifully, pulling in AM and FM stations from far away, while producing a beautiful sound. All the cars had four speakers, but the Imperial had the best.

It was in driving the Imperial that we discovered the most schizoid tendencies of the car. Like most Chrysler products, it is equipped with a torsion-bar front suspension and live axle with leaf springs in back. But unlike most of the Chrysler cars we've driven this year, the Imperial feels solid and predictable, exactly the opposite of the experience we had with the Plymouth Fury. There was no wiggling down the rain grooves of the freeway, no wandering, no sloppy behavior. The Imperial *is* softly sprung and shock-valved for that cloud ride, but it is still possible to steer it. Which surprised us consid-

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LINCOLN

The Lincoln Continental has for years been clawing tooth and nail at Cadillac's lead in the luxury-car market, attacking first with totally different engines (as in the V-12), then with styling, and finally with "the quietest car" concept. And before we go any further, we have to say that Lincoln-Mercury is absolutely right: the Continental is the quietest car we've ever tested, with a reading of 65dBA at 70 mph.

Naturally, it simply isn't enough to build a *quiet* car to win in the strange world of luxury car sales; you've got to have that "class" feeling, that special quality that tells the customer that he really has only one choice for a true blue-blood of a luxury car. And that is where Lincoln has historically been behind Cadillac.

For 1975 the Lincoln designers have done nothing extraordinary to their Town Coupe, simply carving a new bezel here or rearranging a texture there. It is the first time the car is catalytic-converter-equipped, though, and that's important, because the Lincoln was the hands-down winner in the High Class Hot Rod sweepstakes: it blasted, tires burning and exhaust belching out that cleaned-up air, down the strip to a quarter mile time of 17.12 seconds and 81.37 mph. Zero-to-sixty rolled by under the big Lincoln's Michelin X radials in 9.5 seconds, the best this year. Top speed was an observable 124 mph. Hot stuff for a luxury car, eh?

Well, in truth, that's exactly why the Lincoln has never fared as well on the market square as the Cadillac; it still has a reputation for being a little avant-garde, a little bit too golf course/country club/Las Vegas-eccentric for the Cadillac buyer. The Lincoln confers status on its buyer—all three cars will do that, almost without effort—but the status is of a subtly different nature than the Cadillac's.

Whatever the difference in how the psychic dice are loaded by the cars, we found the Lincoln to be the most "luxurious" of the three cars, the most comfortable, and the easiest to drive. How's that for putting the cards on the table?

In specification, it is identical to the Caddy and Imperial; it has the same power goodies, automatic lights, intermittent wipers, cruise control, power door locks and so on, but they are all put together in a very well-styled and even—believe it or not—ergonomically sound package.

For instance: all the power controls available to the driver or passenger are mounted on the armrest, which means that adjusting the seat can be done without fumbling for the three little knobs controlling direction as on the Imperial and Cadillac. This single small thing had more comment than any other single facet of our test cars (except their size) and was the most liked. It's that kind of thinking that makes the Lincoln easier to live with. Of course, the other features are functionally the same as on the Imperial/Caddy, but how and where they are used is different, and in most cases better.

Like the cruise control, which is activated by two rocker switches on the steering wheel spider: the driver can switch the car in and out of cruise control and even accelerate or decelerate *without* taking his hands off the wheel. Not only is the Lincoln's system simpler (both the Cadillac and Imperial systems use a button on the end of the turn indicator stalk plus a main switch) but easier to use, thus insuring that it *will* be used, and thereby help fuel consumption.

The other interior details on the Lincoln were just as impressive. It was, in fact, the only car to really *look* classy, to say elegance in no uncertain terms. (Even the flank-bumper strip has an embossed bas-relief rococo pattern). Our test car was white with a light beige interior, nearly the classic white-on-white, and it was a visual and tactile knockout; we felt like we were in some Age of Reason Parisian parlor, about to meet Voltaire.

Much thought has obviously gone into the dashboard design; the speedometer is of the ribbon variety, with a red tip to mark the speed, and little details like the different-shaped knobs for the lights and wiper (round for the lights, hexagonal for the wiper), which are the only things obscured by the steering wheel, tell you that somebody actually sat in the car and realized one dark night that it's annoying as hell to fumble around for the lights and have the wipers come on.

The seats themselves are very comfortable, with just the right support where you need it and plenty of adjustment leeway. Instead of the single armrest typical of the other two cars, the Lincoln came with two; one attached to each seat, and we felt it was a good idea spoiled by reality, since splitting them made them so thin that without a load on them they vibrated at higher speeds, producing a visual irritant to mar the peace of the interior. And when we say peace, we mean it; sometimes—at idle—we weren't sure if the engine was running or not.

Like the Imperial, the Lincoln had a cavernous rear seat, and the appointments there were as good as the rest of the car. The rear seat passengers, in addition to having their own cigarette lighters, also had their own map lights (a feature shared with the Imperial), and so did the front seat occupants, who had not only an overhead dome light, but also aircraft-type reading lights.

Visibility out of the large greenhouse of the Continental was excellent, the best of the three cars, although that blind spot behind the opera window was just as annoying on the Lincoln as on the Cadillac. Like the Imperial, the Continental had peaked fenders, which greatly aided parking . . . *anything* to help overcome the bulk of the cars in delicate maneuvers is welcome.

Trunk space on the Lincoln was as expansive as on the other two cars, but with a difference in that it was deep as well as wide; putting bags of groceries down into the trunkwell was like burying them.

Strangely enough, if the Lincoln has an Achilles heel, it is the car's chassis. It is odd that a car so quick should be so ungainly, but we found it to be so. On the skid pad the engine starved and stalled occasionally, and the car leaned like a wounded white whale as it slowly wound its way through the transient response course, spewing gasoline out its gas cap all the while. But the biggest blow to the car's performance chart fell at the drag-strip, where, after laying down several quick quarter miles, we began the brake tests and found . . . a 5200-lb. sled. As soon as you stood on those four disc brakes, it would start to stop, wallowing all over like a crazed hippo, until it finally came to rest, usually over 200 feet from where we had applied the brakes. It was a sweaty-palms maneuver all the way, but we finally got a 191-foot run from the car. Stopping from 60 mph in 200 feet just does not belong in 1975; it is more like 1955, when cars had 1-inch drum brakes and two-ply El Cheapo tires. For a car with those Michelins, huge vented discs and "Sure-Track" diagonal braking system, to stop like a '55 Wallower is just too much. That experience soured our day with the Lincoln, and we hope the next one we test will be better. What it means to the Lincoln driver is that he'd better be acutely aware of the developing traffic situation if he's moving very fast, or else he'll collect a lot of somebody else's tail section.

We had an additional problem that baffles us still. The Lincoln is equipped with the same auto-on, auto-off lights that the others were, and one night, after shutting everything down and noting the lights go off and the shutters start to come down over them, we walked away. We shouldn't have, because when we came back the next morning, the shutters were halfway down and the lights were off, but the battery was flat as a billiard table. We recharged the battery and after awhile the car worked fine, but the little incident

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CADILLAC

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could crest 14 mpg, but only at the expense of getting off the line faster than a snail; inertia takes a heavy toll on a heavy car.

Cheapness of the interior aside, many of the features on our test Caddy were ones we liked. The car absolutely bristled with monitoring lights to check other lights; there were two little red batlike bulbs mounted above the rear window that you could see in the rearview mirror that told you the taillight's condition, while the three lights mounted on each fender took care of that extremity. The climate control was a cinch to use and worked perfectly; if you set the thing at 47 degrees, you'd better want to cool off in a hurry, because a blast of cold air to freeze the arctic would come out of the nine hundred vents all over the car. The cruise control was likewise simple to use and very effective, whether at 90 or 55 mph, and the automatic lights (they knew when to come on or off by way of a photocell mounted in the headlight nacelle which sensed fading light) eliminated the worry of leaving your lights on; they shut themselves off 20 seconds after the ignition was turned off. The interior lights can also be activated by pushing the doorhandle button, which also turns on small lights set into the doorhandles themselves, so that you can see to put your key in the lock. The inside lights also stay on for 20 seconds after you activate them.

It is difficult, for one who enjoys driving, to like the Cadillac, because the chief automotive virtue of the car is the way it makes the miles roll by effortlessly, without sensation other than the gentle leaning around a corner or a remote "thuk!" of the tires encountering a chuckhole. And for us it was especially disappointing to find such a middle-class interior in a Coupe DeVille. There is no doubt that you can go down to your Cadillac dealer and order one with not just luxury but "super-luxury" oozing from every Gucci-styled nook, but in the standard form, the way we drove it, the contact paper wood and plastic chrome spoiled the whole effect.

No wonder the peasants are restless; their Chevies are as aristocratic as their employer's Cadillacs. Maybe democracy is still alive after all . . .

IMPERIAL

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erably; we had expected the tendency to wobbly ride to grow even greater in the top-of-the-line car, but it just was not so.

Our skid pad results bore that out. The big silver Imperial drifted around the circle at 31.12 mph, for a lateral figure of .650, not an unrespectable figure for an American car by any means, and its transient response was on a par with that figure. It of course understeered badly (with 2850 lbs.over the front wheels that's not too surprising) but was always controllable, the power steering giving positive feedback right up to the breakaway point. That steering was in fact one of the Imperial's best features, and one that puts it far ahead of either the Lincoln or the Cadillac, both of which had vague, deadfeeling power assistance to the steering system. The Imperial's was never dead, and the attitude of the front tires was easy to sense. Maybe that's not enough to sell a car to a stock broker, but it is proof to us that Chrysler still has the engineers who know how to get the job done.

Acceleration and braking were also middle-of-the-road. The car stopped from 60 mph in 167 feet, and it made it to 60 mph from a standing start in 11.5 seconds, crossing the quarter mile mark in 18.05 seconds and at a speed of 78.31 mph. We noticed that—due undoubtedly to the car's 440 cubic inch V-8 driving through a three-speed automatic and a 2.71:1 rear end—the Imperial went better as it gathered speed, much like the Pontiac Firebird tested in the March issue. That rear end also gave the Imperial a fuel consumption figure of 11.6 mpg, allowing you to go 290 miles on the car's 25 gallon tank. Unleaded is of course the necessary fuel, as with each of the other cars, since they all have catalytic converters as the antipollution device.

When we got out of the Imperial for the last time, we had mixed feelings about it, more so than with either of the other cars. We'd expected it to do a little better in braking because of its standard four-wheel disc brakes, and the odd seats left us a little sore. But the car's competence on the road overcame our major objections to its interior and "luxury" level, giving rise to the suspicion, that maybe, just maybe, the days of the 300s aren't gone forever. Because the Imperial proved that there are still *engineers* at Chrysler.

LINCOLN

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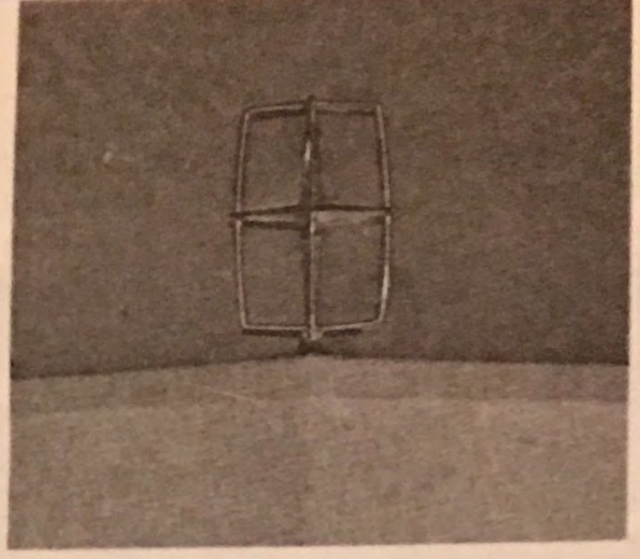
points up one thing about these cars that the potential buyer should be aware of: the complexity of the systems designed to save you from winding up your windows and turning on and off your lights draws its inevitable toll in reliability. Now, that is not to say that these cars are unreliable; quite the contrary, they're built like pillboxes, but the chance of a component or system failure obviously goes up with the degree of sophistication, and these car's support systems, although simple in concept, are as complex in the flesh as an Apollo spacecraft's. Just in our test period we noted several minor malfunctions on each car; nothing to get excited about, but then these were *new* cars . . . the obvious question is, what happens in 50,000 miles? There is no reason to suspect that the major components—the engine, gearbox, differential—would not last that long, but the little gadgets all over the car could be a different matter.

One system that worked flawlessly on the Lincoln was the cruise control, which is primarily responsible for the 13.1 mpg figure the car achieved for an overall number. That means that with the Continental's 24.2 gallon tank, you can squeeze at least 317 miles from one tank of unleaded. That 460 cid V-8 has a lot to do with that, of course, since it is—believe it or not—one of the more efficient engines in Ford's stable.

We said in the introduction to this test that owning one of these cars was like displaying a huge credit card to the world. That is true most of all in the Lincoln, despite the sales figures. We got more admiring glances of the "someday,boy,I'm gonna have one of those" variety with the white Lincoln than we did with either of the other cars. Everywhere we went, people openly stared, something we found hard to get used to in a big car, which are usually invisible on today's roads.

It all comes for a price, though. The Lincoln was the most expensive—by almost a thousand dollars—of our test cars, with an options list as long as your arm. It was *loaded*, so much so that you'd have to go to a Mk IV to jump a rung on the L-M ladder of luxury. Still, it could be argued that up in the thin air of the ten-grand cars an extra eight hundred bucks is unnoticeable. Maybe so; the Lincoln certainly isn't. Look out, Cadillac.

Continental



CADILLAC COUPE DE VILLE

PERFORMANCE DATA

Acceleration, sec:

0–30 mph	3.9
0–40 mph	5.5
0–50 mph	8.1
0–60 mph	10.9
0–70 mph	14.3
0–80 mph	19.0
Standing start, ¼ mile	17.66
Speed at end ¼ mile, mph	78.32
Avg accel over ¼ mile, g	0.201

Speeds in gears, mph:

1st (4200 rpm)	54
2nd (4200 rpm)	88
3rd (4200 rpm) (est.)	122
Engine revs at 70 mph	2400

Speedometer error:

Electric speedometer	Car speedometer
40 mph	40.8 mph
50 mph	51.0 mph
60 mph	61.2 mph
70 mph	71.4 mph
80 mph	81.6 mph

Brakes:

Min stopping distance from 60 mph, ft	153
Avg deceleration rate, g	0.786

Fuel economy:

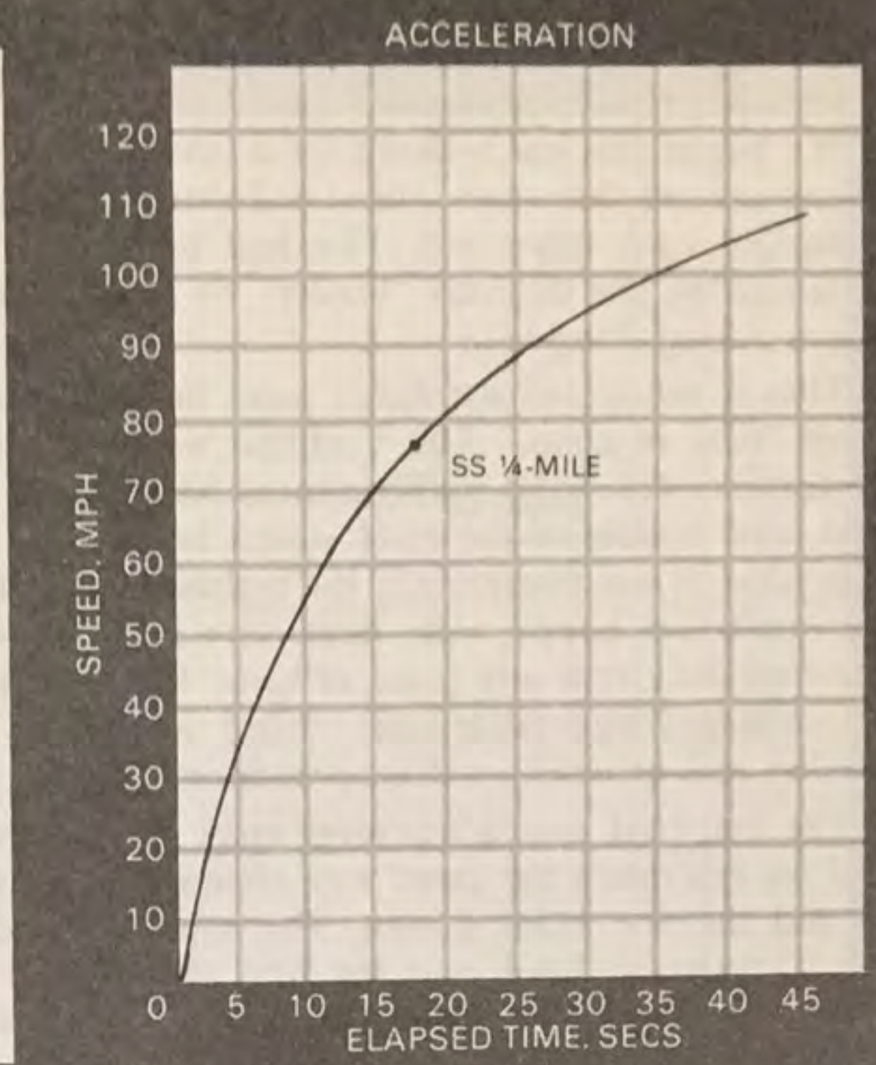
Overall avg	11.6 mpg
Range on 27 gal tank	313 miles
Fuel required	unleaded

Handling:

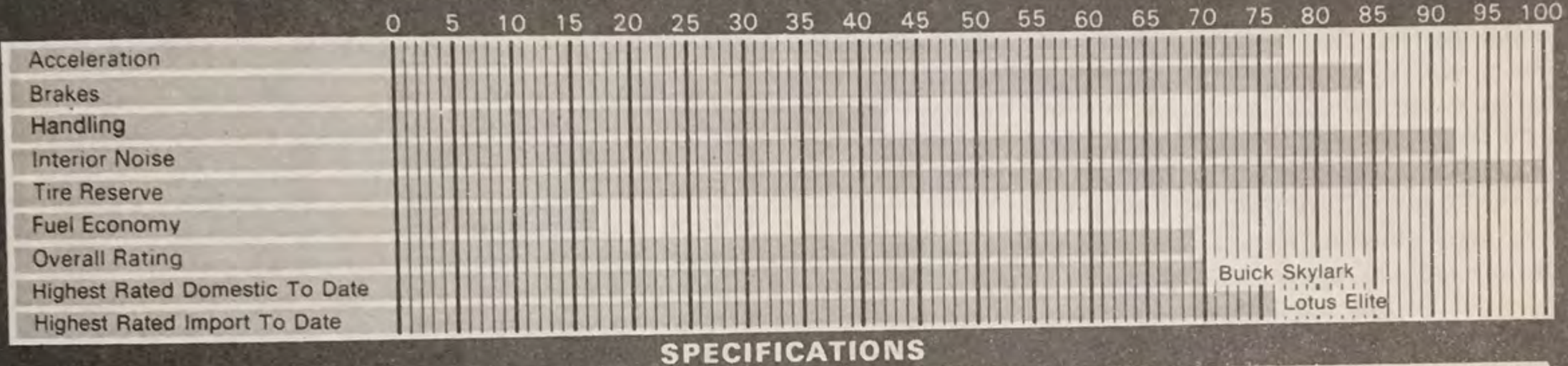
Max speed on 100-ft rad, mph	30.03
Lateral acceleration, g	0.605
Transient response, avg spd, mph	21.63

Interior noise, decibels (dBA):

Idle	48
Max 1st gear	65
Steady 40 mph	58
50 mph	61
60 mph	64
70 mph	67



Graph Of Recorded Data Expressed In Percentage of 100 (100 = best possible rating) *



SPECIFICATIONS

Engine:

Type	OHV V-8
Displacement, cu in	500
Displacement, cc	8195
Bore x stroke, in	4.300 x 4.304
Bore x stroke, mm	109.2 x 109.3
Compression ratio	8.5:1
Hp at rpm, net	190 @ 3600
Torque at rpm, lb/ft, net	360 @ 2000
Carburetion	1 4-V

Emissions, gm/mile:

Hydrocarbons	0.5
Carbon monoxide	7.0
Nitrogen oxides	1.7

Prices:

Factory list, as tested	$10,908.00

Accessories included in price: DeVille Cabriolet—$236; leather upholstery—$200; 60/40 seat—$113; 6 way seat—$125; AM/FM stereo radio/tape—$229; door guards—$7; tilt/telescope wheel—$98; remote trunk lock—$65; carpeted floor mats—$36; trunk mat—$10; twilight sentinel—$45; rear defog—$73; cruise control—$100; guidematic—$52; remote mirror—$29; illum. vanity mirror—$43; cycle wipers—$26; illum. entry—$50; level control—$84; outside thermometer—$17; theft deter—$108; Calif emiss. test—$45; heavy duty cooling—$23; fuel monitor—$25; accent stripe—$40.

Manufacturer's guarantee and service:

Warranty (mos/miles)	12/12,000
Oil change (mos/miles)	6/7,500
Lubrication (mos/miles)	6/7,500
Tune-up (miles)	
Minor	18/22,000
Major	as required

Driveline:

Transmission	3 spd-auto
Gear ratios:	
1st	2.48:1
2nd	1.48:1
3rd	1.00:1
Final drive ratio	2.73:1
Driving wheels	rear

Wheels and tires:

Wheels	15 x 6
Tires	LR 78 x 15
Uniroyal steel radial	
Reserve load, front/rear, lb	637/1443

General:

Wheelbase, ins	130.0
Overall length, ins	230.7
Width, ins	79.8
Height, ins	53.8
Front track, ins	63.3
Rear track, ins	63.3
Trunk capacity, cu ft	15.94
Curb weight, lbs	4950
Distribution, % front/rear	57/43
Power-to-weight ratio, lbs/hp	26.05

Body and chassis:

Body/frame construction	separate body/frame
Brakes, front/rear	vented disc/drum
Swept area, sq in	428.5
Swept area, sq in/1000 lb	86.6
Steering	recirc. ball, pwr. asst.
Ratio	17.8:1
Turns, lock-to-lock	3.25
Turning circle, ft	48.16

Front suspension: Independent, upper and lower arms, coil springs, tubular shocks, anti-roll bar.

Rear suspension: Live axle, four link, coil springs, tubular shocks, automatic leveling.

Test Equipment Used: Testron Fifth Wheel and Pulse Totalizer, Lamar Data Recording System, Esterline-Angus Recorder, Sun Tachometer, General Radio Sound Level Meter

*Acceleration (0–60 mph): 0% = 34.0 secs., 100% = 4.0 secs.; Brakes (60–0 mph): 0% = 220.0 ft., 100% = 140.0 ft.; Handling: Skid pad lateral accel., 0% = 0.3g, 100% = 0.9g, Transient response, 0% = 20 mph, 100% = 25 mph (average skid pad and transient response for overall Handling percentage); Interior noise (70 mph): 0% = 90.0 dBA, 100% = 65.0 dBA; Tire reserve (with passengers): 0% = 0.0 lbs., 100% = 1500 lbs. or more; Fuel economy: 0% = 5 mpg, 100% = 45 mpg or more.

Summary

We began this test looking for a luxury car winner and found instead three cars whose collective vices and virtues cancelled each other out. The bad braking of one was balanced by the dubious "luxury" of another, and so on down a long, long list.

That is not to say we didn't have favorites, cars which were "best in class." The Cadillac was the best *overall* performer, with solid performances on the strip and skid pad, and middle-of-the road sound levels and fuel consumption. It was numerically the highest rated car, a rating we don't feel happy with, because we didn't really like the Cadillac, from any point of view. It was garish where we expected understatement, cheap where we expected quality and generally a disappointment.

The Imperial was a question mark before we started and we felt much the same way after all the results were in and the test miles driven. The sound engineering of the Chrysler tradition was the best thing about the car, a thing at odds with its purpose, although it endeared itself to us for that very reason.

The Lincoln was by far the most luxurious in the sense of elegance, of opulence, and of silent operation. But the terrible performance of the car on the brake and skid pad tests so eliminated the peaceful serenity of the car for us that we simply couldn't give it the title of "winner." There is no doubt, though, that if it would stop half as well as it goes, it would be the best all-round car, with its superior fuel economy throwing in the final point.

Perhaps more important than our failure to find the all-time super luxury car was the insight we gained through thousands of miles and weeks of driving and testing these cars into the mental and emotional and even physical reasons why people buy them, or want to. The answers have special significance in today's world, in which confusion and turmoil are the rule and peace the exception.

First, we found that the cars' avowed purpose—the conferring of social status—was as effective today as twenty years ago. People *still* react to the visual promise of big, luxurious-looking cars with an almost tangible desire, and what that says about our culture is obvious.

Second, we found an unexpected reason for buying a huge luxocar: the isolation it offers from the cares, strains and tensions of the world. It brings to mind the half-serious Buick commercial of a little while ago, in which a man finds his domestic life too unbearable—kids, dogs, telephones, endless noisy hassles—and finds true peace of mind just sitting in his Buick. Well, that's no joke; these cars *do* offer respite from daily battle, they *can* shield you from everything unpleasant in life . . . as long as you can stay out of an accident, keep putting gas in the car and involve yourself as little as possible with reality. That growing numbers of people, who probably feel trapped like rats in "the sinking ship of civilization" (*Newsweek* calls it Apocalypse Chic), are yearning for peace—even the kind of artificial peace offered by these cars—is a sign that something is wrong with some of our cultural solutions, that it is time to change a few things. And ironically, one of the things that could help the situation immensely is the easing of the traffic and energy problems which these cars, each almost 20 feet long, can never do.

Thus we must conclude that the seemingly-important trend to luxury features and cars is basically a short-term fashion, fueled by the desire to escape and the weight of today's problems; that, if not next year, or the year after, then in two years, we will begin to *correct* the problems facing us instead of escaping them by driving mobile bedrooms. At least we hope so.

TECH SCAN

These three American luxury cars differ from the great numbers of other domestic cars not in conception, nor design, nor in many cases even in the actual parts which are common with their lower-priced cousins. They differ mainly in that they have simply *more* of everything. To many buyers, it is probably important which one has the *most* of whatever that thing is they're looking for. And towards that end, the luxury cars are the final answer to the American dream of everyone someday owning a Cadillac. So the shootout becomes who can build the *best* Cadillac.

They are all powered by V-8 engines; each the largest made by their respective corporations. The Imperial engine, at only 440 cubic inches the smallest of the lot, is derived from the 400 which was derived from the 383. There was at one time a real fire-breather 440, with two four barrel carburetors and such, but this engine is, for several reasons, not of that ilk. First, environmental regulations have taken their toll on performance and the economy movement has brought along taller axle ratios and tighter transmissions. That, coupled with the primary purpose of this engine, which is to move a large mass as unobtrusively as possible, means that the Imperial is no stoplight GP winner.

With 460 cubic inches the Lincoln has the middle-sized engine of the three, and it is also the heaviest car. But, surprisingly, it was far and away the fastest in our acceleration trials. Maybe the answer lies in the 3.00:1 rear axle, the lowest of the lot. (Remember when a three-to-one axle was the economy version?) Whatever, it really stormed along and recorded a 0–60 time of 9.7, which is incredible for a car of this size and weight, especially in 1975.

Leave it to Cadillac to have the largest engine made in the world, for all we know, for use in a passenger car. The 500 cid V-8 was originally used in the Eldorado only, leaving other Cadillacs with the smaller version, a 472, but now *all* Cadillacs get the 500. And it is a *real* big-car engine; many of the mountings for auxiliaries are cast into the block or head, since everybody who buys this car is going to order everything with it anyway. And of the three, it is surely the smoothest and least obtrusive. Its performance is somewhere between the other two, but it goes about its business in a manner which is perfectly suited to the car's image.

The Cadillac's rotating dial outside thermometer.

Behind each of these engines is a three speed automatic transmission and a live rear axle. The drivetrains are really more like what you might expect in a truck, but quieted down and smoothed over. Which makes sense, as with the weight of these cars, truck-size drivetrain components are required.

The drivetrain components may be truck-like, but the suspensions contain enough rubber bushings and iso-clamps to be the sole support of Malaysia. Here the word is to thoroughly, completely, and everlastingly, isolate and insulate the pas-

CHRYSLER IMPERIAL LE BARON

PERFORMANCE DATA

Acceleration, sec:

0–30 mph	4.3
0–40 mph	6.0
0–50 mph	8.7
0–60 mph	11.5
0–70 mph	14.6
0–80 mph	18.6
Standing start, ¼ mile	18.05
Speed at end ¼ mile, mph	78.31
Avg accel over ¼ mile, g	0.197

Speeds in gears, mph:

1st (4200 rpm)	55
2nd (4100 rpm)	91
3rd (3800 rpm) (est.)	124
Engine revs at 70 mph	2150

Speedometer error:

Electric speedometer	Car speedometer
40 mph	42.8 mph
50 mph	53.5 mph
60 mph	64.3 mph
70 mph	74.9 mph
80 mph	85.6 mph

Brakes:

Min stopping distance from 60 mph, ft	167
Avg deceleration rate, g	0.720

Fuel economy:

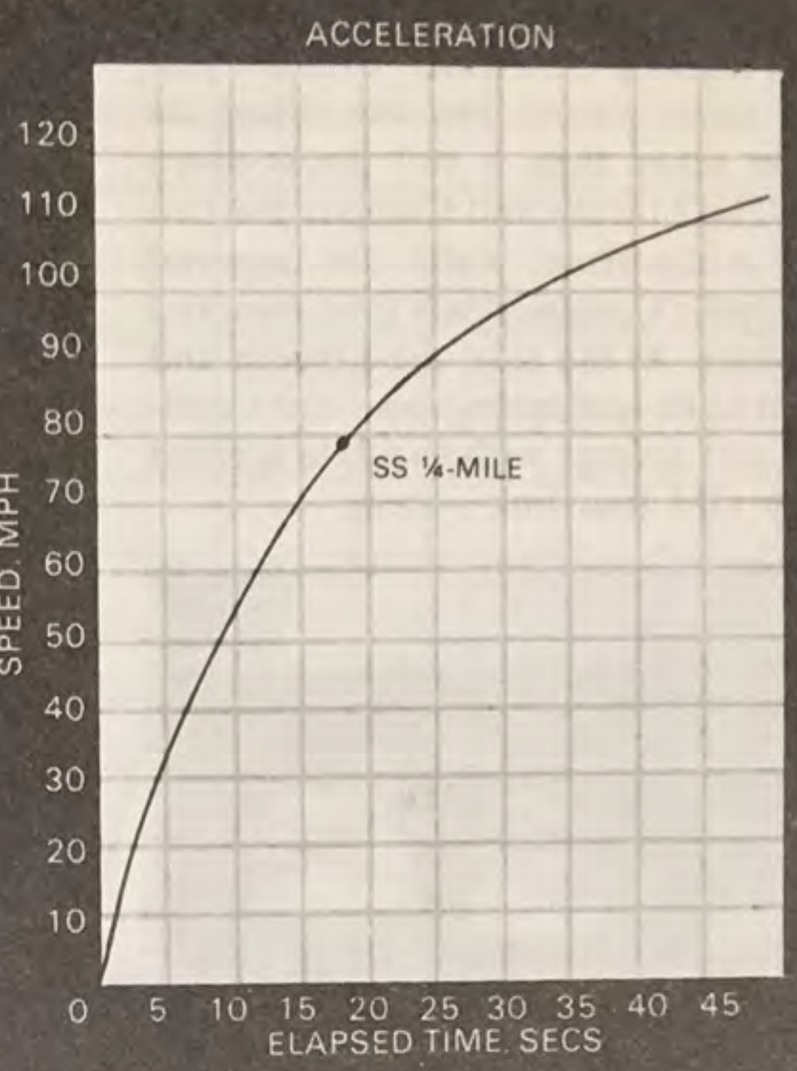
Overall avg	11.6 mpg
Range on 25 gal tank	290 miles
Fuel required	unleaded

Handling:

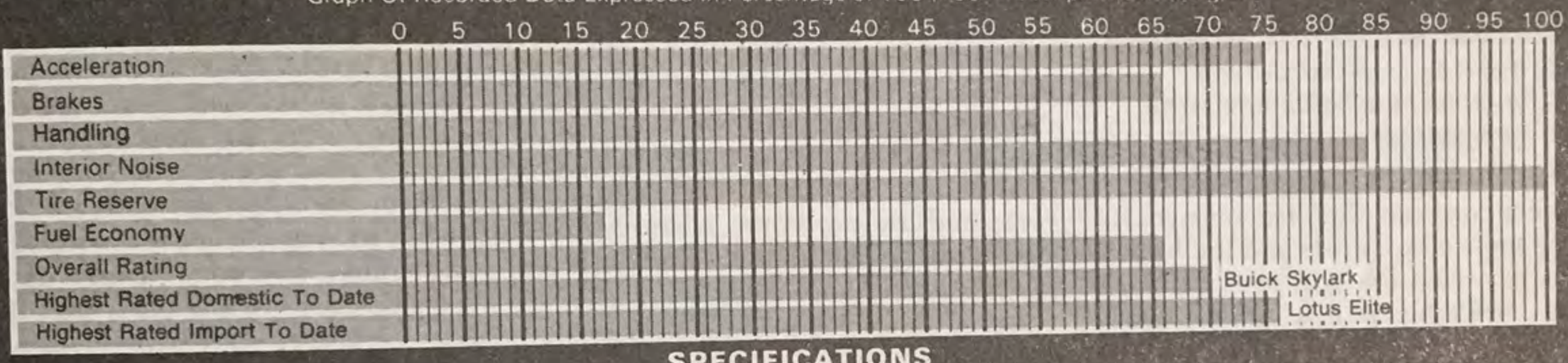
Max speed on 100-ft rad, mph	31.12
Lateral acceleration, g	0.650
Transient response, avg spd, mph	22.62

Interior noise, decibels (dBA):

Idle	47
Max 1st gear	67
Steady 40 mph	60
50 mph	63
60 mph	66
70 mph	69



Graph Of Recorded Data Expressed In Percentage of 100 (100 = best possible rating) *



SPECIFICATIONS

Engine:

Type	OHV V-8
Displacement, cu in	440
Displacement, cc	7212
Bore x stroke, in	4.32 x 3.75
Bore x stroke, mm	109.7 x 95.2
Compression ratio	8.2:1
Hp at rpm, net	215 @ 4000
Torque at rpm, lb/ft, net	330 @ 3200
Carburetion	1 4-V

Emissions, gm/mile:

Hydrocarbons	0.3
Carbon monoxide	2.0
Nitrogen oxides	2.9

Manufacturer's guarantee and service:

Warranty (mos/miles)	12/—
Oil change (mos/miles)	6/5,000
Lubrication (mos/miles)	6/—
Tune-up (miles)	
Minor	—/15,000
Major	as required

General:

Wheelbase, ins	124.0
Overall length, ins	231.0
Width, ins	79.7
Height, ins	54.5
Front track, ins	64.0
Rear track, ins	63.7
Trunk capacity, cu ft	19.6
Curb weight, lbs	5100
Distribution, % front/rear	54/44
Power-to-weight ratio, lbs/hp	23.7

Prices:

Factory list, as tested....$10,440.25

Accessories included in price: Divided seats—$253.35; rear defrost—$76; sentinel lighting—$43.75; fuel pacer—$33.95; 6-way power seat—$253.35; power door locks—$60.70; AM/FM stereo w/ search tuner—$347.10; tilt/telescope steering wheel w/rim horn blower—$103.85; Crown Coupe package—$569.30

Driveline:

Transmission	3-spd auto
Gear ratios:	
1st	2.45:1
2nd	1.45:1
3rd	1.00:1
Final drive ratio	2.71:1
Driving wheels	rear

Body and chassis:

Body/frame construction	unit w/ stub frame
Brakes, front/rear	disc/disc
Swept area, sq in	442.6
Swept area, sq in/1000 lb	86.8
Steering	recirc. ball, pwr. asst.
Ratio	18.9:1
Turns, lock-to-lock	3.5
Turning circle, ft	48.04

Front suspension: Independent, upper and lower control arms, torsion bars, tubular shocks, anti-roll bar.

Rear suspension: Live axle, leaf springs, tubular shocks.

Wheels and tires:

Wheels	15 x 6.5
Tires	LR 78 x 15
Goodyear steel radial	
Reserve load, front/rear, lb	635/1295

Test Equipment Used: Testron Fifth Wheel and Pulse Totalizer, Lamar Data Recording System, Esterline-Angus Recorder, Sun Tachometer, General Radio Sound Level Meter

*Acceleration (0–60 mph): 0% = 34.0 secs., 100% = 4.0 secs.; Brakes (60–0 mph): 0% = 220.0 ft., 100% = 140.0 ft.; Handling: Skid pad lateral accel., 0% = 0.3g, 100% = 0.9g, Transient response, 0% = 20 mph, 100% = 25 mph (average skid pad and transient response for overall Handling percentage); Interior noise (70 mph): 0% = 90.0 dBA, 100% = 65.0 dBA; Tire reserve (with passengers): 0% = 0.0 lbs., 100% = 1500 lbs. or more; Fuel economy: 0% = 5 mpg, 100% = 45 mpg or more.

sengers from any harsh contacts with the outside world, and the engineers given the job succeed admirably. Not just tar strips and Bott's dots, but chuckholes and railroad tracks are traversed with the passengers never aware they are sitting on anything other than a soft goose-down pillow. The Lincoln and Cadillac use coil springs at the front, while the Imperial uses Chrysler Corporation's time-honored torsion bars. At the rear, the Lincoln and Imperial have leaf springs and the Cadillac has coil springs with the axle located with the GM four-link system.

To light the way Cadillac owners get rectangular headlights and wrap around turn signals.

In execution, the Cadillac seemed to have the most pillowy ride and the Imperial was better on the skid pad, which is probably academic, as it is inconceivable that any luxury car owner would ever drive any of these cars anywhere near their limits, at least on purpose. The suspensions do just about exactly what they were designed to do; give a ride on a cloud. But in any area of handling at all, they simply refuse to take part. Quick freeway lane changes, in-town maneuvering, and curving roads are a real handful. The suspensions are so soft, the cars are so large and grossly heavy, and the insulation of the driver is so complete that it is just impossible to try anything more than sedate motoring without having things get out of hand.

And if things do get out of hand, you are going to need more than a little room to get stopped. Both the Lincoln and the Imperial have four-wheel disc brakes, but there is a simple law of physics involved here concerning the inertia of masses. These are large masses and therefore, at speed, they possess a lot of inertia, and they are just not going to stop very well. For some strange reason, the Cadillac, with discs on the front and drums at the rear, was the best stopping car with a distance of 153 feet from 60 mph. But the Imperial covered 167 feet before it got stopped, and the Lincoln required a long, long 191 feet before it came to a sliding, smoking halt. So leave yourself some room, especially if we're in front of you.

But if your particular thing is to just get inside and cruise, then this is where to do it. Once those massive doors close behind you, you're removed from the more mundane worries of the peasants. Quietness and reclining comfort is what these are all about. Our chart values for the 100% figures have been chosen as a sort of goal to try for, but which should really be unattainable. Then we started doing sound level recordings in these cars. We began with the Imperial, and got a figure of 69 dBA at 70 mph. Quiet, but not astounding, but then the Imperial wasn't really the top dog anyway, in our mind. Then the Cadillac came in with 67

Imperial's cruise control/turn indicator stalk.

dBA, which is really getting down there. But we weren't prepared for the Lincoln's 65 dBA. *That* was the lowest number achieved since we've been doing this and was 100% on the scale. A long discussion and a call to Lincoln-Mercury Engineering. LM said they got a figure of 63.8 dBA! So, (a) we know our equipment works and the procedure is correct, and (b) you can believe all those Lincoln commercials about quiet cars.

And to make the proud owner certain of his standing, he gets extra little trinkets not allowed the proletariat. Every car in this country is available with every manner of power-assisted and air-conditioned device reasonable. So something more than just eight-track stereo and power seats are needed here.

The Imperial had a sentinel lighting system with a little knob above the dash to turn for early or late shutoff of the lights. The fuel pacer light, which is really just a vacuum gauge, was in unit with the left turn signal light on the left front fender. When you are accelerating too much, the light comes on, which is supposed to wake you up so you'll lift off the gas. And of course, individual power seats and power door locks. But the neatest gadget on the Imperial was this little button on the floor which you press with your toe and automatically changes stations on the AM/FM stereo radio. You don't like the station, just step on the button and you get the next one on the dial. If you're out in the country and don't have anything else to do, you can watch the station indicator bar move back and forth across the dial, searching vainly for a station.

The Gadget Derby winner was the Cadillac. To start with, if the car is locked and you push the outside door button, the inside lights in the car and little lights above each key slot come on, so if it's dark you can find the inside of the car. Once inside, you can tell how cold or hot the rest of the world is by the little thermometer built into the outside rearview mirror, and on this thermometer the pointer stays still and the dial moves, so the numbers are always within easy view. To help you save our dwindling resources, there are a pair of lights above the dash. One glows green when the car is being driven "economically" and the other glows amber when it is not. (By trying hard, we were able to make them both glow at the same time.) There is another group of three lights atop each front fender. The white tells the driver the headlights are on, the green one that the high beams are on, and the amber flashes with the turn signals. And then, above the rear window where they are visible in the inside rearview mirror are two little red lights mounted in a pod. They glow whenever their respective taillights are on, flash with the turn signals, and even glow brighter when the brakes are applied.

The Lincoln didn't have nearly the gadgetry of the Cadillac, but it seemed to be the best, most complete combination of luxury features and was done in a more subtle, maybe more refined manner. For instance, all the controls for the seats and windows were grouped together in the driver's door armrest, so everything was right at the fingertips and you wouldn't be forced to grope under or around things, and unlike the combination dashboard stalk positions of the other two, the Lincoln's cruise control buttons were on the face of the steering wheel where they were easier to reach and see. The Lincoln interior seemed to say Luxury Car to us more than the other two, the Imperial tending to come across as just another jazzed-up Chrysler Corporation car and the Cadillac putting us off somewhat with all the plastic and contact paper wood veneer. The Lincoln dash was just more impressive.

And the vanity mirrors. All of these cars had lighted vanity mirrors in the passenger's side sunvisors. Just flip the sun visor down and open the cover and there's your own little vanity mirror with a switch for high or low lighting. (It was interesting to note that all the vanity mirrors were exactly the same and made by the same manufacturer, differing only in the correct color of plastic to match the interiors.) But the Lincoln had *two* vanity mirrors, for both passenger and driver!

It was the vanity mirrors that finally clinched for us the matter that had been bugging us the whole test: these cars are, for all practical purposes, technically identical. It's as though the engineers and stylists for each car went out and secretly bought the other guy's car to copy, and then in helpless anger, realized that his car was just like *their* car, and simply concentrated on achieving "difference" by outside thermometers and dual vanity mirrors. With engineering thought as advanced as that, who needs Conestoga wagons? ●

LINCOLN CONTINENTAL TOWN COUPE

PERFORMANCE DATA

Acceleration, sec:

0–30 mph	3.7
0–40 mph	5.4
0–50 mph	7.3
0–60 mph	9.5
0–70 mph	12.1
0–80 mph	16.6
Standing start, ¼ mile	17.12
Speed at end ¼ mile, mph	81.37
Avg accel over ¼ mile, g	0.216

Speeds in gears, mph:

1st (4600 rpm)	51
2nd (4600 rpm)	86
3rd (4600 rpm)(est.)	124
Engine revs at 70 mph	2600

Speedometer error:

Electric speedometer	Car speedometer
40 mph	42.6 mph
50 mph	53.3 mph
60 mph	63.9 mph
70 mph	74.6 mph
80 mph	85.2 mph

Brakes:

Min stopping distance from 60 mph, ft	191
Avg deceleration rate, g	0.629

Fuel economy:

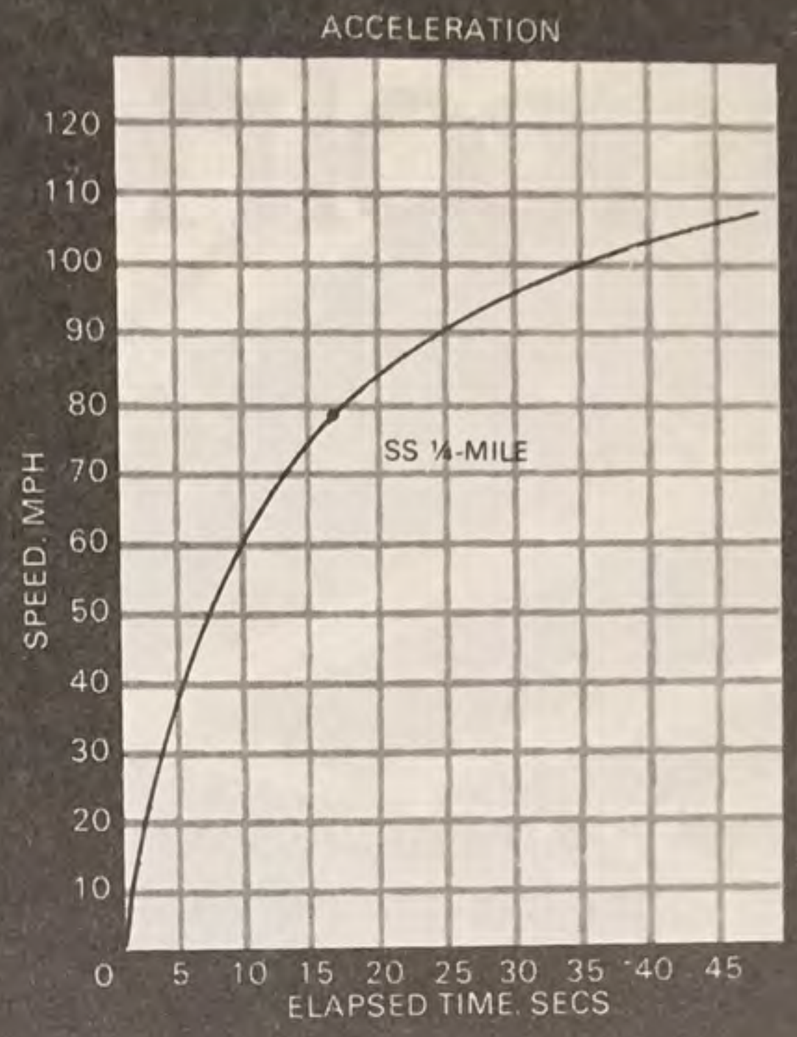
Overall avg	13.1 mpg
Range on 24.2 gal tank	318 miles
Fuel required	unleaded

Handling:

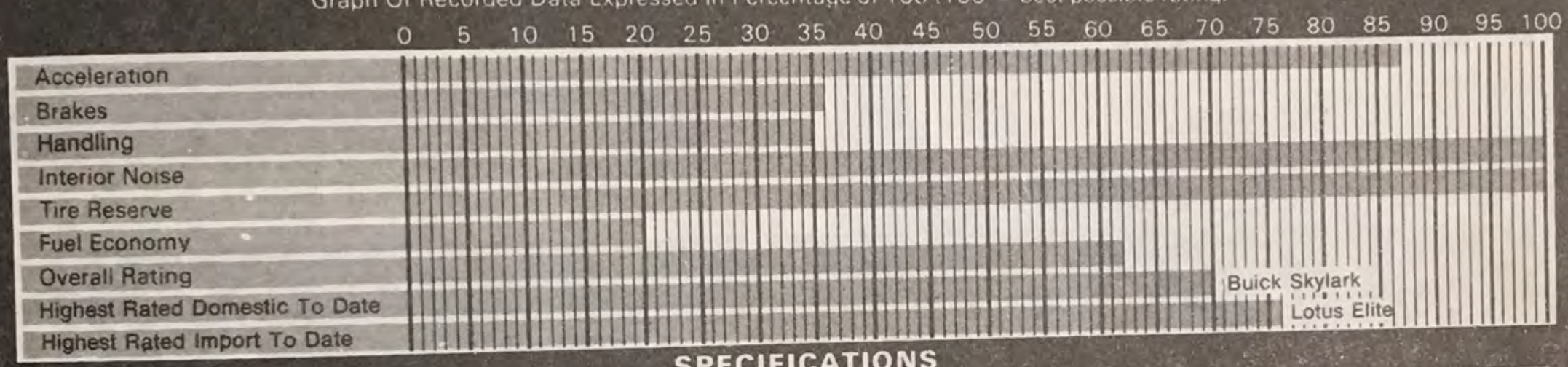
Max speed on 100-ft rad, mph	29.27
Lateral acceleration, g	0.575
Transient response, avg spd, mph	21.20

Interior noise, decibels (dBA):

Idle	45
Max 1st gear	65
Steady 40 mph	54
50 mph	56
60 mph	62
70 mph	65



Graph Of Recorded Data Expressed In Percentage of 100 (100 = best possible rating) *



SPECIFICATIONS

Engine:

Type	OHV V-8
Displacement, cu in	460
Displacement, cc	7539
Bore x stroke, in	4.36 x 3.85
Bore x stroke, mm	110.7 x 97.8
Compression ratio	8.0:1
Hp at rpm, net	206 @ 3800
Torque at rpm, lb/ft, net	357 @ 2600
Carburetion	1 4-V

Emissions, gm/mile:

Hydrocarbons	NA
Carbon monoxide	NA
Nitrogen oxides	NA

Manufacturer's guarantee and service:

Warranty (mos/miles)	12/12,000
Oil change (mos/miles)	-/5000
Lubrication (mos/miles)	-/36,000
Tune-up (miles)	
Minor	-/15,000
Major	as required

General:

Wheelbase, ins	127.2
Overall length, ins	232.8
Width, ins	79.6
Height, ins	55.4
Front track, ins	64.3
Rear track, ins	64.5
Trunk capacity, cu ft	19.3
Curb weight, lbs	5200
Distribution, % front/rear	58/42
Power-to-weight ratio, lbs/hp	25.2

Prices:

Factory list, as tested	$11,893.10

Accessories included in price: Traction-Lok diff—$60; 3.00:1 rear axle—$30.70; headlamp grp.—$94.70; WSW radial tires—$38.30; coach lamps—$60; speed control—$104; twin comfort seats w/ pass. recline—$318.70; Sure-Track brakes—$249.40; four wheel discs—$172; rear window defrost—$86.70; AM/FM stereo radio/tape—$138.70; interval wipers—$26.70; Town Coupe option—$532; anti-theft—$108; security lock grp—$6.70; remote mirros—$29.40; luxury wheel covers—$82.70; illum. vanity mirrors—$100.00

Driveline:

Transmission	3-spd auto
Gear ratios:	
1st	2.46:1
2nd	1.46:1
3rd	1.00:1
Final drive ratio	3.00:1
Driving wheels	rear

Wheels and tires:

Wheels	15x6.5
Tires	235R x 15
Michelin steel radial	
Reserve load, front/rear, lb	448/1382

Body and chassis:

Body/frame construction	separate body/frame
Brakes, front/rear	vented disc/disc
Swept area, sq in	415.3
Swept area, sq in/1000 lb	79.9
Steering	recirc. ball pwr asst.
Ratio	22.6:1
Turns, lock-to-lock	3.5
Turning circle, ft	51.5

Front suspension: Independent, upper and lower control arms, coil springs, tubular shocks.

Rear suspension: Live axle, 3-link, coil springs, tubular shocks.

Test Equipment Used: Testron Fifth Wheel and Pulse Totalizer, Lamar Data Recording System, Esterline-Angus Recorder, Sun Tachometer, General Radio Sound Level Meter

*Acceleration (0–60 mph): 0% = 34.0 secs., 100% = 4.0 secs.; Brakes (60–0 mph): 0% = 220.0 ft., 100% = 140.0 ft.; Handling: Skid pad lateral accel.: 0% = 0.3g, 100% = 0.9g. Transient response: 0% = 20 mph, 100% = 25 mph (average skid pad and transient response for overall Handling percentage); Interior noise (70 mph): 0% = 90.0 dBA, 100% = 65.0 dBA; Tire reserve (with passengers): 0% = 0.0 lbs., 100% = 1500 lbs. or more; Fuel economy: 0% = 5 mpg, 100% = 45 mpg or more.